

Linguistics in the language class:  
on null, overt and post-verbal subjects in L2 Italian  
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Many studies have brought to light that even very advanced speakers of L2 Italian show persistent difficulties in the choice and interpretation of subject pronouns (Sorace and Filiaci 2006; Belletti, Bennati and Sorace 2007 and much subsequent work). Similarly, in answers requiring the identification of the subject, they don't opt for the VS strategy at a rate comparable to Italian native speakers, and tend to transfer the answering strategy of their L1 (Belletti and Leonini 2004). In this work we address the following RQs:

1) Can negative evidence, in the form of explicit mention of the relevant properties, grounded on linguistic theory, influence the acquisition of the discourse-related properties of subjects in L2 Italian?

If so:

2) Does this influence lead to native-like choices?

3) Is this influence long lasting?

The study contemplates three steps and three groups of speakers:

Experimental L2ers (EXP)

Non- experimental L2ers (NEXP)

Italian native speakers (Controls)

In STEP 1 (pre-test), we test all speakers groups through three forced choice tasks.

In STEP 2, EXP L2ers are exposed to negative evidence and undergo a (reduced) immediate post test session

STEP 3 consists in a follow- up testing session for EXP and NEXP L2ers, five weeks later.

Results show that L2ers differ from Controls in the pre-test, and the differences are in line with those reported by the previous literature. Negative evidence has a strong effect in the short term, but L2ers choices are more categorical than those of the Control group. The follow up testing session shows an interesting dissociation that will be discussed.